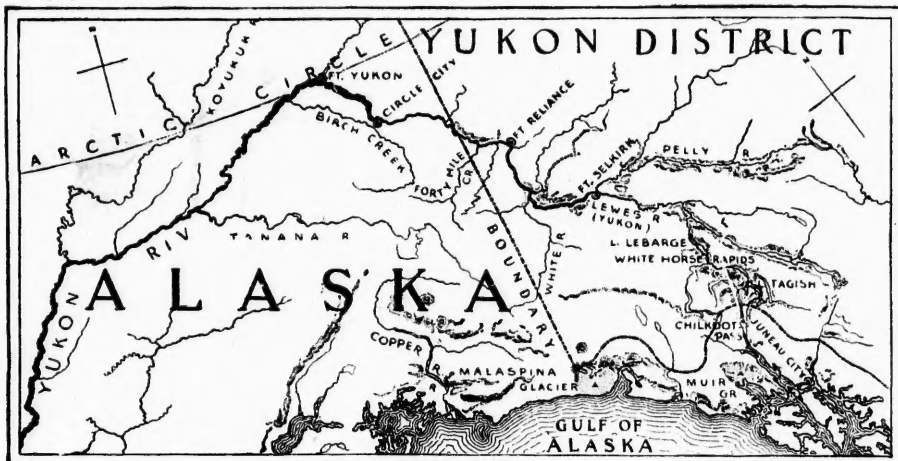


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Map of the Yukon River and District.



OVER THE CHILKOOT PASS TO THE YUKON

By Frederick Funston



THE tourists who every summer crowd the excursion steamers that sail up the long stretches of the inland passage to Alaska find their view to the north and east everywhere limited by a range of snowy peaks silhouetted like card-board against a sky as clear and blue as that of California. On the one side is a narrow strip of main-land and on the other a thousand islands, large and small, that constitute southeastern Alaska, where are the busy mining town of Juneau, and Sitka, the sleepy old capital. This is the Alaska of the tourist, famous for its great glaciers, its beautiful fiords, and its Thlinket Indians and their totem poles. But beyond the big white range is another and a totally different country, the valley of the Yukon, a great, lone land where winter reigns supreme for nine months of every year, and whose inhabitants are roving bands of fur-clad savages. Over in the British Northwest Territory, just across the coast range from Dyea Inlet, Alaska, is a chain of lakes surrounded by snowy

mountains and drained by a small stream, which, now roaring between gloomy cañon-walls and now gliding among birch-covered hills, bears away to the northwest. On either hand it receives numerous tributaries, some of them of great size, and seven hundred miles from its source leaves the British possessions and enters Alaska. After winding for 1,400 miles across this territory it pours its huge flood into Behring Sea. On the lower half of its course the river receives the waters of the Porcupine, Tanana, Koyukuk, and numerous smaller streams, until the little brook, less than ten feet wide, draining Lake Linderman, has in the 2,100 miles of its course become one of the mightiest rivers on the face of the earth—three miles from bank to bank, thirty feet deep, and with a current of five miles an hour.

Four of us were landed with our effects at the head of Dyea Inlet, a hundred miles north of Juneau, at day-break on April 10, 1893. My three companions were McConnell, a grizzly old Canadian, Thompson, a miner from Idaho, and Mattern, a good-natured German, who had mined in half a dozen Western States. I was the only one of



the party who had had any previous Alaskan experience, but all had roughed it in other countries, and we felt equal to the much-vaunted terrors of Chilkoot Pass, Miles Cañon, and the White Horse Rapids. McConnell, Thompson, and Mattern were bound for the placer gold-mining camp of Forty Mile Creek, at that time the only one on the Yukon, while I had a sort of roving commission from the United States Department of Agriculture to make a botanical collection, take weather observations, and obtain any other scientific information possible, and eventually extended my journey to the Mackenzie River and the Arctic Ocean, and thence down the Yukon to its mouth, which I reached after a journey on foot and in rowboat of more than 3,500 miles. Our outfit consisted of two small tents, a couple of hand-sleds, each eight feet long, with steel-shod runners; blankets, guns, ammunition; a six-weeks' supply of flour, bacon, and coffee; a whip-saw, axes, and other tools for boat-building, and my collecting material and two small cameras, the whole weighing about a thousand pounds. Our plan was to take the usual route of miners bound for the Yukon—to cross the Chilkoot Pass and descend to the frozen lakes on the other side—dragging our outfit on the hand-sleds across these lakes until we reached a point where there were trees sufficiently large to build a small boat in which to continue

the journey. Near our landing-place was a small Thlinket Indian village of Dyea, whose inhabitants turn an honest penny every spring by assisting miners bound for the interior in packing their supplies to the summit of the pass. We divided our goods into seven packs and engaged five men and two women to carry these loads to the summit of the pass, a distance of fifteen miles, where they were to leave us to our own devices. The start from the village was made on the morning of the second day after our arrival. The Indians supported the loads on their backs by the aid of deerskin bands, passing across the forehead. Several children carried on their backs light loads, consisting of food and cooking utensils for the use of the Indians, while two of the dogs also wore packs.

Our route lay up the valley of the Dyea River, a small creek which heads near the foot of Chilkoot Pass, and which we were compelled to wade a number of times. Near sea-level the snow had nearly all disappeared, but a couple of miles up the cañon the ground was covered, and from here on our progress was much impeded by it. Every two or three hundred yards the entire party stopped to rest. At one o'clock we reached the forks of the river, seven miles from our starting-point, and the Indians, throwing off their loads, said we would camp for the night. They were completely exhausted by



floundering through the soft snow under their heavy packs. The snow at this camp was about two feet deep, and much more fell during the night. Half of the next day was spent in wading through snow from three to six feet deep to the place known as Sheep Camp, only five miles beyond. Our camp for the second night was at the upper limit of timber, at the foot of the dreaded pass, and only twelve miles from the coast that we had left two days before. Snow had been falling and did not cease until the morning of the next day. Roused before daybreak, we found the sky clear and the air frosty. Below us was the scattering growth of stunted spruce-trees and above the great slopes of snow and ice. Looking for a couple of miles up a large gorge flanked by precipitous snow-covered mountains, we could see at the summit, thousands of feet above, the little notch known as the Chilkoot Pass, the gate to the Yukon land. The seriousness of the work at hand was now apparent. Our picturesque retinue of children and dogs was left in camp to await the return of the Indians, and having had breakfast at eight o'clock, the seven Indians and ourselves began the toilsome climb upward. On either hand were the huge masses of the coast range, buried in perpetual snow and ice, nobody knows how deep. The Indians, struggling under their heavy loads, stopped for breath every few moments. We four

white men had the exasperating task of dragging along the two empty sleds.

As we ascended, the snow, which at lower altitudes had been soft, was found to be hard and crusted, being on the last part of the ascent more like ice than snow. At eleven o'clock we had reached the foot of the last and hardest part of the ascent. From here to the summit is only half a mile, but the angle of the slope is about forty-five degrees, and as we looked up that long trough of glistening ice and hard-crusted snow, as steep as the roof of a house, there was not one of us that did not dread the remainder of the day's work. As soon as the Indians ascertained that the crust of the snow was hard and unyielding they divided the packs, leaving nearly half of their loads at the foot of the ascent, intending to make a second trip for them. The two women who had accompanied us thus far now returned to Sheep Camp, and one of the men, producing a strong plaited line of rawhide, about one hundred feet long, which he had brought with him, passed it under every man's belt, lashing the nine of us together about ten feet apart. The man at the head of the line carried in his hands one of our hatchets, and as we advanced cut footholds in the ice and hard-packed snow. The slope being too steep for direct ascent, we resorted to "zigzagging"—that is, moving obliquely across the bottom of the trough for about sixty



feet and then turning at right angles in the opposite direction. Our progress was painfully slow, as every step had to be cut. It was no place to indulge in conversation. There was no use in stopping, as there was no opportunity to stretch one's limbs and nothing to sit down on, so that we kept pegging away, and the hours seemed endless before we stood on the narrow crest of snow and ice that divides the valley of the Yukon from the sea. It was six and a half hours since we had left Sheep Camp and three since we had lashed ourselves together at the foot of the last ascent. On the summit all threw themselves down on the snow and remained motionless for half an hour, when the Indians started down to get the remainder of their packs that had been left at the foot of the last portion of the ascent. The trail having already been cut and not being hampered with the sleds, they were with us again in less than two hours. We had by this time taken in our surroundings. Behind us and to the right and to the left was a jumble of icy peaks, and below the zigzag trail up which we had labored so breathlessly. But these things were now of small interest, and our gaze was fixed ahead, where, stretching away in billows of spotless white,



was the valley of the great river of the north. There was neither rock, nor tree, nor shrub, nor any living thing to break the monotony of that huge blanket of snow, the wooded shores of the lakes being concealed by a range of low hills. The use of the two sleds that had been brought along empty was now apparent, and on to them was loaded and securely strapped down the thousand pounds of stuff that the Indians had carried to the summit. And down grade we started on the northern side of the range. For the first half mile down the glassy slope it was a wild ride. All efforts to control the sleds were fruitless, and we concluded to simplify matters by getting on board and taking "pot luck" with whatever rocks or other obstructions might be at the bottom. The route lay down the bottom of a wide gorge, so that we could not well get far out of the way. The sleds, each with two men in addition to its load of five hundred pounds, flew down grade with the speed of an express train. It was well that they were of oak and the runners shod with steel, for sometimes they would clear the snow for thirty feet at a bound. No sooner had we got started than we began to wonder how we were to stop. We found out. The sled ahead of the one I was on struck an uneven

A Small Fire which Smoked.



place and went over; its lashings broke, and for a few brief seconds the air was filled with rolls of blankets, sides of bacon, mining tools, and earnest, soulful profanity. Our sled coming on to a gentler slope and softer snow, was eventually stopped without disaster. In half an hour Thompson and Mattern got their sled reloaded and joined us. We were now out of the gorge and on a sort of bench or flat covered with soft snow. We got into the harness and, pushing and pulling, struggled on in the hope of reaching Lake Linderman before night. For several hours the wind had been rising and was now coming down from the north at a furious rate, and before darkness set in the air was so full of flying snow that one could not see fifty feet. When night came we were so exhausted and so weakened by hunger that we decided to abandon the sleds until the next day. In order to mark the location a long-handled shovel was stood on end in the snow, and draped with a spare blanket. Then taking each a blanket, we struck out through the gathering darkness, down a ravine which we correctly judged was the tributary of Lake Linderman. After what seemed an endless struggle through the howling storm we reached, at about eleven o'clock, a little clump of dwarfed spruce-trees, the upper limit of timber. Collecting some dry branches, we got on the lee side of a cliff, and after many fruitless efforts

started a small fire, which smoked and spluttered a great deal, but was singularly devoid of warmth. Wrapped in blankets, we huddled together all night, while the wind roared up the cañon walls and piled the snow about us. When we stretched ourselves out at daybreak the next morning the storm had almost died away. We were weak and ravenous from hunger and thirst, for we had not had a mouthful of food nor water since leaving Sheep Camp. After a weary tramp of about four miles, which had taken us five hours, we found the sleds entirely buried, nothing but the blanket tied to the shovel being visible above the surface. We got out the one which contained the cooking utensils and part of the provisions, and all four taking hold, dragged it slowly, a hundred yards at a time, toward our camp of the night before. It was exasperating to have with us provisions that were of no use, as it was out of the question to eat raw beans and flour. Thompson, in a frenzy of hunger, insisted on eating a raw piece of bacon, with disastrous results. Dozens of times during the afternoon we threw ourselves down on the snow from sheer exhaustion, but toward evening reached the remains of the camp at the foot of the cañon-wall. As soon as another fire could be built we melted snow for water and prepared a meal of flapjacks, bacon, and coffee, breaking a fast of thirty-seven hours,



during which we had had not a wink of sleep. Without troubling to put up a tent or make any sort of camp, we drew our blankets about us and lay back in the snow for ten hours of glorious sleep. The next day we brought down the remaining sled, a comparatively easy task, as the trail had been opened the day before. Our worst hardships for the time being were now over. The sky was clear and the air cold enough to make exercise comfortable. On this day, only one hundred yards below camp, I found a spring feeding a small stream a few inches deep, which was soon lost to sight in the snow. It was the very beginning of the mighty Yukon. Most of the sixth day from the coast was spent in recuperating our physical selves, but before evening we dragged the two sleds for a couple of miles down the ravine to Lake Linderman, the first of the chain of six lakes of the Upper Yukon. Lake Linderman is six miles long and half a mile wide, and is shut in by glacier-worn granite hills. Here and there along its shores are a few small spruce and black-pine trees. All of these lakes remain frozen until early in June. An examination proved that the surface of the lake was in very good condition, and hitching ourselves again in the sleds, we covered the entire length of Lake Linderman and crossed the short portage on to Lake Bennett, twenty-six miles long, going into camp

for the night in a clump of spruce on the west shore, six miles from its head, having dragged our half-ton of stuff twelve miles. The following day was marked by a unique and successful experiment. A strong wind was blowing from the south, and in order to utilize it we put on to the front of each of the sleds a sort of V-shaped mast, on to which was rigged a tent-fly. Then, with a good wind astern, we went down the lake at a lively trot. It was not necessary to pull a pound. One man merely held on to the tongue of each sled to guide it and keep it from going too fast. In that day we covered the remaining twenty miles of Lake Bennett and followed the bank of a short river connecting it with Lake Nares, where we went into camp. Lake Nares is the smallest of this system, being about three miles long and two miles wide. The general surface of the country was quite broken, and to the east were lofty mountains. Wherever there was soil there were trees, mostly spruce, pine, and poplar, but the largest not more than a foot in diameter. The snow throughout this region was about three feet deep on the level. On going into camp for the night on this journey down the frozen lakes we would pull off from the ice to a grove of trees on the lake shore, and after collecting a quantity of dry wood build a fire, and then, preparing the usual rough, but appetizing, camp-meal, would lie down

Camp on Lake Narz.



to sleep. The tents were not put up, and usually the only attempt at a bed was a quantity of spruce-boughs strewn on the snow. Two days of hard work, in which there was no wind to aid us, took our little party over Lake Tagish to the short river connecting it with Lake Marsh. The weather had been quite warm for two days and the snow had begun to melt perceptibly, but we were much surprised to find this stream open in mid-channel. Following the left-hand, or west, bank of this stream for about four miles, we went into camp a mile above Lake Marsh.

On the other bank, directly opposite, were the Tagish Houses. These buildings, two log structures of the Thlinket type, have no permanent occupants, but are the yearly rendezvous of bands of natives who meet on neutral ground to trade and indulge in their great annual drunk, with the accompanying feasts and dances. Here come not only the Tagish Indians, who live in the immediate vicinity, but Thlinkets from Chilkat, Dyea, and Taku River, and Tinneh or Stick from as far away as the mouth of Pelly River. The fact that the snow was melting rapidly, making sledding extremely difficult, impelled us to establish a camp here for the purpose of building a boat in which to continue the journey. There was plenty of timber, some of the trees being of fair size. The first day was spent in constructing a "saw-pit," a

scaffolding about eight feet high. Two good, straight spruce-trees were then felled and a twenty-foot log cut from each. These logs were about sixteen inches in diameter, and after being rolled by means of skids on to the pit, were squared with the whip-saw and gradually and laboriously worked up into boards. We had barely settled down into this new camp before we were overtaken by a party of a dozen men bound for Forty Mile Creek, who had crossed the Chilkoot Pass three days after we did. These men went into camp near us for the purpose of building boats, and every day, from sunrise until dark, the woods rang with the sounds of whip-saws, axes, and hammers. As several of these new arrivals expected to prospect along the bars of the upper river before going to Forty Mile Creek, and Thompson wished to join them, our party was now reduced to three—McConnell, Mattern, and myself. The two weeks spent in this camp were not at all unpleasant. We were up every morning at daybreak, and after breakfast went to work in the saw-pit, and, with the exception of an hour at mid-day, kept at it until nearly dark. The whip-saw is an instrument with a blade eight feet long and with a handle at either end. One man on top of the scaffolding drew the saw up, while one standing on the ground pulled it down. The extra man busied himself planing the boards and doing odd jobs about

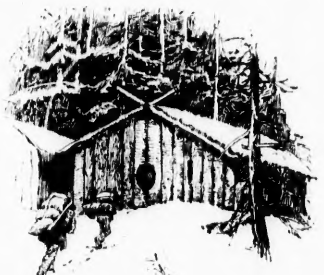
View across the Yukon.



the camp. Small game was plentiful, and in an hour's walk with the gun one could always bring in a day's supply of grouse, ducks, and rabbits. The air was alive with geese and cranes on their northward migration. Near us were camped a couple of families of Tagish Indians, and a boy about ten years old spent most of his time loafing about our camp and eating such scraps of bacon and flapjacks as were thrown to him. On account of this weakness for the leavings of a rich man's table he was christened Lazarus. At the end of a week we had a pile of clean, straight boards, 20 feet long, 10 inches wide, and $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch thick. A week later the boat was completed. She was a flat-bottomed skiff, 18 feet long, 26 inches wide at the bottom and 4 feet at the top, and had two pairs of oars and a mast which could be rigged with a square sail made from a tent-fly. She was very carefully put together, the seams being filled with wicking and well pitched. Although built of green lumber, this boat stood the long portage of the frozen lakes and around the White Horse Rapids, ran Miles Cañon, and collided with blocks of ice innumerable. The next year she carried me on my long, lonely journey down the big river to the sea, 2,000 miles from the camp on Tagish River, where she was built, and is now the property of a Jesuit missionary, to whom I gave her. There was no champagne at hand, so,

as the boat slid over the blocks of ice on her initial plunge into the river, a pailful of Yukon water was dashed over her bow and she was christened Nancy Hanks, in honor of the little trotter that had acquired fame the preceding year. The miners who had stopped there for the purpose of building boats completed their work at the same time, so that we left in company. Our outfit and provisions, the latter materially reduced in bulk, we stowed away in the boat, and on top were put the two sleds, that would be needed in the portages over Lakes Marsh and Lebarge.

The little fleet of boats, seven in all, dropped down the river to the head of Lake Marsh, which was still frozen, and here the boats were dragged out of the water on to the ice of the lake. Two sleds were put underneath each boat, one under the bow and one under the stern, and our companions rigged large blankets as sails on to their boats in order to lighten the work of the twenty-mile portage. Then, one pulling the forward sled and one pushing behind, the six boats started out down the lake. The small sails aided very materially, there being a strong breeze astern. Before leaving





camp, McConnell, who was an ingenious fellow, had rigged up a contrivance to enable us to avoid this draft-horse work, and with astounding success. This was merely a light pole, the middle of which was fastened to the bow of the boat and one end to the tongue of the forward sled, the other extending back nearly to the mast. A man standing at the bow of the boat could, by moving this pole to the left or right, control the forward sled perfectly. Two spars had been attached to the mast, one at the top and the other near the gunwale of the boat, and between them was stretched a tent-fly ten feet square. By means of a halyard the upper spar could be lowered instantly, thus shortening sail at will.

By the time that these elaborate preparations were completed the miners with their six boats had got two miles out on the ice, and now looked like a few dark spots on the white surface. Before leaving they had good-naturedly jeered at our "winged chariot," and offered, if we were not over the lake in a couple of days, to come back for us; but our time had come now. As the sail filled with the strong wind we gave the Nancy Hanks a shove and jumped on board. McConnell took the steering pole in the bow and away she went. The novelty of the situation made it a most exciting ride. Gradually we crept up on the file of men trudging along, dragging and pushing their heavy loads,

and passed them, fairly skimming over the ice. They threw their hats in the air and yelled, while a wild-eyed individual, who called himself "Missouri Bill," grasped his Winchester and proceeded to puncture the atmosphere in all directions. But even this was not glory enough. No sooner had we passed these men than we determined to make improvements. The sail was lowered and we came to a stop: the mast was taken out and lengthened six feet by lashing on to it an extra spar that we had in the boat. Across the end of this was lashed one of the boat's oars, making a spar eighteen feet above the ice. From this there was suspended a large double blanket fourteen feet long, the lower end fastened to the boat. Our speed was materially increased, at one time doubtless reaching twelve miles an hour—not half bad when one considers that the boat and its load weighed more than a ton. The great height of the blanket sail above the surface made our novel iceboat top heavy, however, and more than once we came near going over. As we approached the northern end of the lake the ice became more uneven, with occasional drifts of hard-packed snow. Crossing several of these successfully gave us overmuch confidence and brought us to grief at last. I was steering at the time, and sighted ahead of us a drift that extended entirely across the lake. As we approached it seemed but little worse

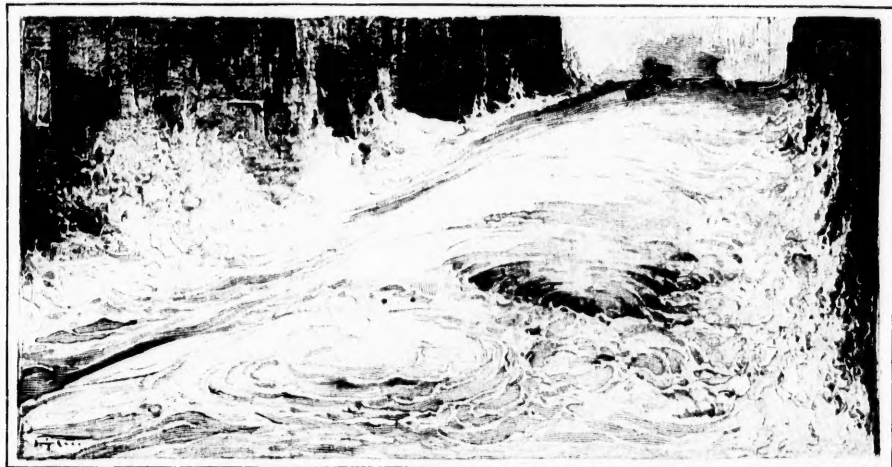


than some that we had already crossed. Mattern wanted to take in sail and examine it, but was voted down two to one, and we went at the obstruction full tilt. Just before striking I saw that the ice on the other side had a big sag, and shouted to McConnell to cut the halyards. It was too late; the sleds struck the drift and went over it beautifully, but as we went down on the other side the boat turned quartering to the wind, and over we went. I landed on all fours a dozen feet ahead of the boat; McConnell and Mattern were thrown against the sail, while bags of flour, boxes, guns, and tools flew in every direction. The bolster of the forward sled and all the spars and the mast were broken, while the boat itself was badly wrenched. It required an hour to overturn the boat and reload it. We got up what nautical men would call a "jury rig," and limped over the remaining mile to the foot of the lake. It had taken three hours and forty-two minutes to run the twenty miles from the head of the lake to where we were wrecked, exclusive of the half-hour lost in putting up the additional sail. The men whom we had distanced did not overtake us, and but two of them reached the foot of the lake before dark. Between Lake Marsh and Lake Lebarge, which is the last and largest of the chain of lakes, there are fifty-five miles of river, but in this short space are the two greatest obstructions to navi-

gation in the whole Yukon system—Miles Cañon and the White Horse Rapids.

The stream was about three hundred feet wide, from two to six feet deep, and very swift. Great quantities of ice were piled up along the banks and in some places large blocks were grounded on shallow bars. These, with occasional boulders, made navigation exciting work. Spring had now so far advanced that the snow had nearly all disappeared and the weather was superb. On arriving at the foot of Lake Marsh the boat was relaunched and the sleds placed on board instead of underneath, and the next morning we were under way down the river. At two o'clock we passed the mouth of the Tahkeena River, coming in from the left, and at five went into camp for the night. We knew that we must now be near Miles Cañon, and the next morning kept a sharp lookout. We had gone scarcely a mile when we whirled around a bend and saw ahead a low brown rocky ridge, divided by a slit less than thirty feet wide, and at the same time heard the roar of the river in its wild rush through the cañon. With one impulse we pulled frantically for the bank and got a line ashore and around a tree just in the nick of time. Landing, we found in camp seven men with their boats. These men had crossed the pass a week before we did and had built their boats at the foot of Lake Marsh, and were now engaged in portaging

Through Miles Cañon.



them around the cañon. This cañon was named by the late Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka in honor of General Nelson A. Miles, who had been instrumental in sending him on his trip to the Yukon in 1883. The river, which has been about three hundred feet wide, suddenly contracts to about a tenth of that width, and increasing its velocity to twenty miles an hour, rushes with terrific force through a cañon with absolutely perpendicular walls a hundred feet high. The cañon is only three-quarters of a mile long, and at its lower end the river spreads out into a series of rapids, culminating three miles below in the White Horse. There are two ways of passing this cañon, one by portaging over the hill on the east bank and the other by boldly running through. Some of the men whom we found encamped there were utilizing the former method. The boats were unloaded and dragged out of the water, and by means of a windlass hauled up the hill-slope a hundred feet high, and then pulled on wooden rollers for three-quarters of a mile, being finally slid down another hill to the river. The contents of the boats were carried over by the men on their backs. It is the most slavish work imaginable, and uses up the better part of four days.

Among the party in camp here was a man who had formerly been a Wisconsin lumberman and who announced in lurid language that he was going to

run the cañon. He had set this morning for the attempt, so that we were just in time to witness the feat. The men, dragging their boats up the hillside, stopped work and joined us on the cliff a short distance below the head of the cañon. The old man steered his little boat into the entrance of the gorge, where it was caught by the swift current, thrown up and down like a cork, and in a few seconds was out of sight around the first bend. As he passed underneath we gave him a great cheer, and in a couple of minutes heard a rifle-shot, the prearranged signal that he had passed through in safety. In the meantime a couple of young fellows from Colorado, whom we left on Lake Marsh, came up, and after a half-hour discussion made the attempt. They narrowly escaped destruction, but got control of their boat again, and in a short time we heard another faint rifle-shot down the river. We had seen both ways of passing Miles Cañon, one requiring four days and the other two minutes. We three looked at each other in an inquiring sort of way, and then without a word walked down to where the Nancy Hanks was moored against the bank. All took their places, kneeling and facing the bow, McConnell in the stern, Mattern amidships, and I forward. The oars were placed on board and each of us used an ordinary canoe paddle. I must confess that I never felt sicker in my life than as we shoved

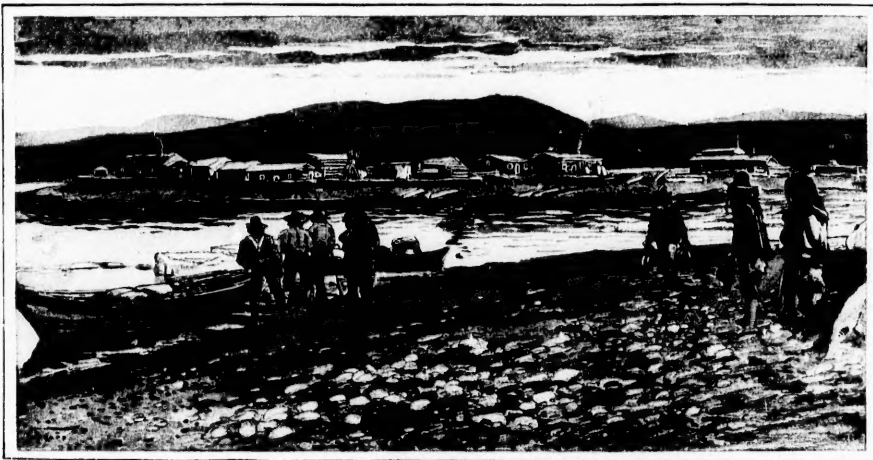


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away from shore and steered for the entrance. It was all over so quickly that we hardly knew how it happened. Barely missing the big rock at the mouth of the cañon, the boat started on its wild ride. The walls seemed to fairly fly past us, and after starting we heard a cheer from the rocks above, but did not dare look up. By frantic paddling we kept in the middle and off from the cañon walls. The sensation was akin to that of riding a bucking broncho. There was not a dry spot on one of us when we got through, and the boat had taken on so much water that she nearly foundered before we could bail her out. But a great weight was off our minds, for Miles Cañon, more than all other things, is dreaded by Yukon travellers. Including those lost in 1894, an even dozen of men have had their boats swamped or crushed like eggshells against the cañon walls, and not one of them has come alive out of that wild maelstrom of water. Below the cañon the river spreads out to its normal width, but is shallow and a succession of rapids. We ran through these for a mile, but after colliding with boulders and ice-cakes a dozen times found it altogether too interesting, and so "lined" the boat the remaining two miles down to the White Horse. Fastening a line to the bow and one to the stern, we waded in shallow water near shore, and so could control the speed of the boat, as we could not otherwise do,

and prevent its being crushed. Arriving at the head of the White Horse, we went into camp, landed all of our effects and spread them out in the sun to dry, and remained idle until the next morning. These rapids are half a mile long, and the river has its usual width of three hundred feet except in the lower part, where the stream contracts to about thirty feet, and drops through a chute for forty yards. We looked the ground over carefully and spent all of the day after our arrival in carrying the contents of the boat through the woods, depositing them at the foot of the rapids. We determined to run the now empty boat through the rapids as far as the chute, instead of lining it. Realizing that it would be very difficult to stop where we wanted to, McConnell took his station on the bank near the head of the chute in order to take a line, which we were to throw to him as we passed. Everything worked smoothly. Mattern and I steered the boat through the rapids, and as we neared McConnell I threw a line, which he caught, and taking a hitch around the boulder, brought us to a rather sensational stop. In this ride I seated myself in the stern of the boat with the kodak and tried to make a snap shot of the rapids as we ran them, but was so excited that three of the four exposures were on the sky, the surrounding scenery, and the bottom of the boat; but of the successful one I am not a

Forty Mile Creek.



little proud. The boat was dragged out of the water on to the rock, around the dangerous narrows, and we went into camp at the foot of the White Horse. The next day we drifted down the river twenty-five miles to the head of Lake Lebarge, which was still frozen, although the ice was becoming quite soft. This lake is thirty-two miles long and eight wide. Here we found in camp Mark Russell, a well-known Alaskan prospector, and three other men, with two boats. After a delay of a day, caused by a severe storm, we began our last and longest portage, Russell and his party accompanying us. The three boats were placed on sleds, as at Lake Marsh, but no sail was raised, as there was almost a dead calm. For three long days we pushed and pulled over the sloppy ice of the lake, and finally, worn out, wet and bedraggled, again reached open water. It was thirty-three days since we had left the coast at Dyea and we had covered but two hundred of the seven hundred miles to Forty Mile Creek. But we had left behind Chilkoot Pass, the six frozen lakes, Miles Cañon, and the White Horse; and from here to its mouth, 1,900 miles, the Yukon is unobstructed save by a few unimportant rapids, and the remainder of our trip was to be a delightful excursion. The next morning we again took our seats in the much-buffed Nancy.

For nine beautiful, cloudless days we drifted down the river to the northwest,

rowing only enough to break the monotony of lounging about in the boat. This part of the stream from Lake Lebarge to the mouth of Pelly River is often called by the miners Lewes River, although it is, as a matter of fact, a part of the Yukon. Great quantities of ice remained along the river-banks, and as the current was strong, there was sure to be an exciting time whenever we attempted to stop to go into camp. The surface of the country was rolling and hilly, backed by low mountains, and was generally wooded in the valleys, the uplands being bare. Caribou and moose were occasionally seen, but we did not succeed in killing any. We passed the mouth of the Teslin or Hotalinqua, and reached the mouth of Little Salmon River, where we found a small camp of Tinnah Indians, the first of these people we had met. They were a fine-looking lot of savages, dressed in skins and guiltless of any knowledge of English. In four days we reached the mouth of Pelly River, the site of old Fort Selkirk, burned and looted by Indians from the coast in 1850. It is a telling commentary on the intelligence of makers of maps that this obscure fur-trading post, abandoned nearly half a century ago and whose only remains are a blackened chimney, should still be marked on every map of that region. The same may be said of Fort Reliance and Fort Yukon, farther down the river.

The river was now much larger, and



for some distance below the mouth of the Pelly islands were numerous. We passed the mouth of White River, the great unexplored stream coming in from the west, which, with its milky flood, discolors the Yukon for five hundred miles, and a short distance below, Stewart River, a large eastern tributary. The Yukon was now from half to three quarters of a mile wide, deep and swift, the banks in some places huge cliffs or palisades 1,000 feet high. On the morning of May 23d we passed the big Indian village of Klondjek, but, despite a vociferous greeting from the natives, declined to stop. All day we were swept along between towering cliffs of red and brown rock, and at five o'clock, rounding a bend, saw below us a group of cabins, surrounding a big storehouse, and in half an hour more were ashore at Forty Mile Creek, the loneliest mining camp on the face of the earth, where it is midnight all winter and daylight all summer, and where the mail comes but once a year. We were the first arrivals from the outside for that spring, and brought the year's budget of news to the three hundred white men who, in addition to the Indians, at that time formed the population of this placer gold-mining camp of the far north.

The village is situated on the left hand or west bank of the Yukon, at the mouth of Forty Mile Creek. There were all sorts of men among the min-

ers, who spent their summers in washing gold out of the gulches, and their winters in playing poker and spinning yarns.

Gold was discovered in the bars along the creek in 1884, and subsequently in the gulches, and placer mining has been successfully carried on ever since. New discoveries made in 1893 caused a considerable increase in the population, so that there are now more than a thousand men in the camp, in addition to those at Circle City, the recently discovered diggings two hundred miles farther down the Yukon, where that stream is intersected by the Arctic circle.

We had been just forty-two days in the journey from the coast. McConnell and Mattern went prospecting for gold, and I never saw them again. The Nancy Hanks had an easy time during the summer, and later in the season did good service, when I pushed on farther to the north.

